



ASHEVILLE DOWNTOWN COMMISSION

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

May 11, 2007 at 8: 30 am

Office of Economic Development

29 Haywood Street in Downtown Asheville

Members Present: Peter Alberice, Pat Whalen, Guadalupe Chavarria, Pam Myers, John Rogers, Julie Brandt, Dwight Butner, Jan Davis, Brad Galbraith, Jesse Plaster

Members Absent: Kitty Love

Staff: Scott Shuford, Sam Powers, Stephanie Monson, Jessica Levengood, Janet Dack

Guests: Janell Kapoor, Sam Ruark, Kristin Peppel

Chairman Whalen opened the meeting at 8:35 am

Minutes

Minutes were not ready for approval; Monson noted that they would be on the website on Monday for review and that she would check with City Attorney to see if minutes could be approved by email.

Ashevillage Building Convergence

Janell Kapoor and Sam Ruark presented an overview of this project to the Downtown Commission.

Notes: described as a 10-day community event on sustainability; to be held June 20-29, 2008; will be focused on community building through 7 – 10 demonstration projects e.g. a bus shelter/kiosk in downtown; features educational programming; Jubilee on Wall Street will be the downtown headquarters; event is based on similar tradition in Portland via City Repair; national sustainability leaders will attend; much outreach and planning has already been done to community including to some elected officials and other organizations. The neighborhood up by McCormick Field will be the site of a residential project that serves as a public demonstration; also possibly improving MLK park/Stephens-Lee/Edible Park with stormwater management demonstration.

Chairman Whalen noted that this presentation was for informational purposes but that later in the process the organizers will likely request a letter of support from the Commission.

Councilman Davis asked if the group had met with the City's Sustainability Advisory Committee on Energy and the Environment and Sam Ruark noted they were scheduled to meet with them that day.

Dwight asked the organizers to contact the Asheville Downtown Association and meet with their events or issues committee in the interest of sharing information.

Design Review

Zona Lofts Redesign: Update

Planner Jessica Levengood noted that the Design Review Subcommittee has met with Applicant and team from Zona. Applicant was sent back to address some items; a May 23rd formal review is scheduled. A motion was made by Peter Alberice to continue the formal review until May 23rd, 2007 at noon in the Office of Economic Development. The motion was seconded by Dwight Butner and approved unanimously.

Master Plan

Chairman Whalen updated on the PED (Planning and Development) Council subcommittee meeting on Wednesday the 9th of May. The Proposed City of Asheville (expansion) budget includes \$170,000 for master plan project. Whalen sees this plan as an opportunity to take advantage of updating and all the good work that went into the Center City Plan.

While the original idea from the Downtown Commission relied on a consultant to do specific work, an alternative approach may be to encourage the City to hire an urban designer on staff that would specifically work on this plan.

City Manager Gary Jackson suggested at the PED meeting that the Commission prepare a one page info sheet. Whalen thinks the Commission should try to speak with individual members of Council before a vote happens on the budget. Councilman Davis added that the Commission should focus on the clarifying what the end product would look like and what it would do for the city.

Five Minute Updates

City Owned Property RFQ:

Sam Powers told the Commission that the Real Estate Research Consultants report on City owned property RFQ would go before City Council on May 22nd. Consultant and staff will recommend RFQ process for seven fairly broad sites; 4 of those 7 will be recommended to Council to move forward; they are the former proposed Haywood Garage area across from Civic Center, City's park maintenance area near MHO, 29 Haywood Street, and the Eagle/Market Street public/private property area.

The Parkside property, S. Charlotte street public works area/water maintenance; and the bus maintenance facility have much potential, but need a management plan and/or better development of a vision for the parcels.

Whalen requested that staff send a copy of the RERC report to the Commission.

Powers told Whalen that if 29 Haywood were sold, staff would like the OED function to remain downtown, and that with such a small staff that it would be possible to find new space downtown (but not in City Hall) however nothing is known yet.

Speaker Series:

Dwight Butner updated on the Downtown Associations speaker series. The first event is planned for Thursday, May 24th with Edward Starkie. He is available to meet with the Commission, Staff, Officials, and stakeholders at any time the next day. The City of Asheville is co sponsoring this event via the Downtown Commission and SEDAC.

Budget:

Monson updated the Commission on downtown-relevant proposed enhancements to next year's budget, i.e the City's budget wish list, which includes:

\$170,000 for downtown master plan; new parking and development manager (from parking services); new gate equipment in garages; repair/maintenance and new construction money for parking decks; Increased money for transit; making the Neighborhood Coordinator position a permanent FTE and adding a neighborhood academy component; more resources for APD; a new sidewalk crew (city-wide); a new sanitation crew just for downtown; money to update a Parks and Recreation Greenway plan; pedestrian enhancements like crosswalks and signals; an assistant Transit and Engineering director; fee rebates for City development goals; Urban Trail maintenance monies; a new position for a sustainability director; monies over the next 4 years for Civic Center repairs; public restroom attendants; \$50,000 for HUB/intergovernmental goals implementation; TIF district implementation possibility.

Pritchard Park Committee:

Monson updated that this week City Council asked the Pritchard Park Committee to hold off on meeting until after Council has their May 29th forum on Homelessness and (Council) has had time to digest the public input on homelessness and also to clarify the exact purpose/charge and best membership on the committee.

John Rogers and Guadalupe Chavarria, members of the Pritchard Park Committee, noted that the process had turned into a battle about homelessness, vs. the original intent of the committee, which they thought was to help gather input to provide recommendations on how to better the park.

Chairman Whalen encouraged the Commission members to be present and take part in the forum on the 29th

Announcements:

Design Review Subcommittee dates

There will be a meeting of the Design Review subcommittee on May 23rd

At noon to discuss Zona Lofts and possibly the Ellington. There will be a TIF funding lecture for boards, electeds, and staff arranged by the Office of Economic Development and date and time to be determined,

Spare Change for Real Change Lock Boxes

Dwight Butner asked that the Commission officially review the Downtown Associations lock boxn design. City Council requested they do this, Butner had a straw poll approval, with conditions that corners be rounded, at the last design subcommittee meeting - but needed to have it officially done here at the regular meeting by vote. John Rogers moved to approve design, seconded by Jesse, and the motion passed unanimously.

Citizen Feedback

Butner noted that residents on South Lexington had complained to the City regarding sidewalk cleaners/blowers running at 4 am and waking them up.

He has heard that staff is looking at it and is waiting to hear back.

There have been complaints/concerns from users/merchants on Commerce Street due to construction regarding First Union/Capital Center as there is inconvenient pedestrian access to Commerce Street. John Rogers, who is partnering on the project, explained that he is being responsive to these concerns and is meeting with neighboring businesses and residents to address.

Center City Plan

Chairman Whalen asked staff to make printed copies of the Center City Plan for the Commission in addition to the digital format cds they received.

Adjourned at 9:40a

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